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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 030821Z JUN 08
FM AIT TAIPEI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9059
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 8323
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 9564

UNCLAS AIT TAIPEI 000760

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DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused June 3 news coverage on new Minister of Foreign Affairs Francisco Ou's first meeting with the local media Monday, in which he elaborated on President Ma Ying-jeou's concept of a "cross-strait diplomatic truce;" on DPP Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen's questioning of the KMT's approach in handling cross-strait relations; on Taiwan's preparations for opening the island to Chinese tourists; and on South Korean President Lee Myung-bak's slumping approval rating and his government's decision to delay the planned resumption of U.S. beef imports. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" criticized KMT Chairman Wu Poh-hsiung's recent remarks that China is unlikely to fire missiles at Taiwan. The article said Wu's "indiscreet" statement will only create an illusion for the Taiwan people and will likely paralyze the Taiwan military's awareness of possible cross-strait crises. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" remained skeptical about the future development of cross-strait relations and said "it is too early to tell where thawing relations between Taipei and Beijing will take us." End summary.

A) "Wu Poh-hsiung's Indiscreet Remark"

The mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] editorialized (6/3):

"[KMT Chairman] Wu Poh-hsiung's remark upon his return [from a trip to China] that Beijing would not launch missiles against Taiwan has caused a disturbance [in Taiwan]. One can say that Wu has made an indiscreet remark.

"Negotiations between two countries on disarmament, arms control or removing missiles would be an issue of major significance. Only after days of long talks between the delegations from both sides, taking time to discuss every detail, and employing all their guiles could some modest achievements possibly be reached. China's missile deployments target the United States, Russia, Japan, India and Taiwan, and a slight move or change in any way will affect the whole situation.

"Besides, missiles are the most effective strategic weapon for suppressing Taiwan independence - thus they cannot be removed easily. Moreover, if China insists that Taiwan offer something in return [for its removal of missiles], could Taiwan give up purchasing the F-16C/D fighter jets? [Taiwan] has given up its major bargaining chips by stating stupidly and voluntarily that it will not purchase submarines and PAC-3 missiles. What price will we have to offer in exchange if [we] ask China to remove missiles in the future? ..."

B) "Beijing's Grand Illusion of Peace"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (6/3):

"Less than three weeks have passed since the Chinese Nationalist

Party (KMT) administration was sworn in and already, if we are to believe world headlines, the Taiwan Strait has been transformed from one of the world's most dangerous flashpoints to the milieu for a neighborly spat. Optimism is high, especially in the wake of KMT Chairman Wu Poh-hsiung's recent visit to China and talks with Chinese President Hu Jintao, which prompted some, including US National Security Council Senior Director for Asian Affairs Dennis Wilder, to praise the rekindled dialogue across the Strait. ...

"But it is wise to remain skeptical on just how solid the basis for all this optimism is. ...Wu's optimism about a possible reduction in missiles, meanwhile, is gullibility at its most extreme. For one, even if China were to dismantle or redirect some of its missiles, the fact remains that hundreds would still be aimed this way. One missile - and the threat to use it - is one too many. Furthermore, quantitative cuts mean very little when they could easily be offset by the increasing precision of those still active. In other words, as long as the intent to use missiles against Taiwan exists, talk of cuts is meaningless. ... It is too early to tell where thawing relations between Taipei and Beijing will take us. While there are, indeed, signs that tension might be diminishing, it is in the long run, when Beijing's patience is tested - and it will be, if Taiwanese negotiators meant what they said when they vowed to protect Taiwan's interests and dignity - that we will see if the KMT's professed intentions will be answered in kind."

WANG